

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently amended) A method of purifying contaminated soil by microorganisms, comprising  
  
adding [[a]] an inorganic soil-improving material to contaminated soil, the inorganic soil-improving material being water-absorbing, and having both non-swelling and non-viscosity properties after absorbing water in contaminated soil containing clay or silt, and then  
  
mixing the soil by agitation, so as to cause the inorganic soil-improving material to absorb pore water contained in the clay or silt,  
  
while adding microbes to the contaminated soil that degrade the contaminants contained within the contaminated soil or utilizing degradation microbes already present in the contaminated soil, thereby microbially degrading the contaminants.
2. (Currently amended) The method of purifying contaminated soil by microorganisms according to claim 1, wherein the degradation microbes are added to the contaminated soil while not being contained by the inorganic soil-improving material.
3. (Original) The method of purifying contaminated soil by microorganisms according to claim 1, wherein aeration is performed for the contaminated soil when the contaminant is microbially degraded.
4. (Cancelled)
5. (Currently Amended) The method of purifying contaminated soil by microorganisms according to claim [[4]] 1, wherein the inorganic soil-improving material is perlite.

6. (Currently amended) A method of purifying contaminated soil by microorganisms, comprising the steps of:

adding [[a]] an inorganic soil-improving material, the inorganic soil-improving material being water-absorbing, and having both non-swelling and non-viscosity properties after absorbing water in contaminated soil containing clay or silt;

mixing the soil by agitation; and

degrading contaminants contained in the contaminated soil by adding microbes to the contaminated soil that degrade the contaminants within the contaminated soil and/or utilizing degradation microbes already present in the contaminated soil.

7. (Currently amended) The method of purifying contaminated soil by microorganisms according to claim 6, wherein the degradation microbes and the inorganic soil-improving material are separately added to the contaminated soil.

8. (Previously amended) The method of purifying contaminated soil by microorganisms according to claim 6, wherein aeration is performed for the contaminated soil during the step of degrading contaminants.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Currently amended) The method of purifying contaminated soil by microorganisms according to claim [[9]] 6, wherein the inorganic soil-improving material is perlite.